

# Living By Faith In Dark Days

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Date: 22 June 2025

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- [ 0 : 00 ] I don't know about you, but it seems like the world to me is going crazy.! Every time you open a web page to the news, someone new is fighting someone else.
- ! We know about Ukraine and Russia, we know about Israel and Gaza, now Israel and Iran is kicking off.
- And to top it all off, Trump has offered asylum to the Boers. And what that has done in our country has ripped open some old wounds in our land that we thought had been healed.
- And there's a huge online discussion at the moment about the rights and wrongs about that particular event. But we all have an opinion about who's right and who's wrong, and what must happen to those we feel have done something wrong, and what should happen to those who have been wronged.
- When we look at this, we think to ourselves, what is going on? We're also filled with anxiety and worry. What is going to happen?
- [ 1 : 19 ] Who's going to come out on top? Will they be good or will they be bad? Is it going to be better for me and my family or worse for my family if Israel wins in Iran?
- Or if Gaza wins against Israel? Or if Trump allows more guys to go to America? Is it good or is it bad for us and for me in South Africa?
- Habakkuk is having the same thoughts that we're having. He's asking himself, why is God allowing evil to flourish, especially in Israel?
- They're meant to be the light of the world. Why is God so against his own people? Well, we saw God's answer last week.
- It was very unexpected. God's answer is, well, you guys have not been doing what I've told you to do, what you should be doing.
- [ 2 : 25 ] So I'm going to stop the evil. For a moment, Habakkuk must have thought, okay, that's great. God is going to come and redeem us. He's going to bring the king that he's always promised.
- And then God says, nope, I'm going to bring the Babylonians. Habakkuk's response, basically, how, Lord, can you do that?
- That's just going to lead to more pain and more suffering and more injustice. And we were left last week with Habakkuk in anxious suspense.
- We were waiting to hear what God would say. And God's answer to Habakkuk is exactly the answer we need to help us process what is going on in our world at the moment.
- And God's answer assures Habakkuk that he does indeed have a plan. But this plan is going to take time. And what Habakkuk has to do, and what we're going to learn that we have to do, is trust in God.
- [ 3 : 30 ] So we're going to look at the first four verses of chapter 2 there. So make sure it's open on your Bible or your app. Habakkuk is standing on the ramparts.

He's waiting to hear what God is going to do. And God's answer is, I've got a plan. Trust me. Have a look at verse 2. Then the Lord replied, Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.

For the revelation awaits an appointed time. It speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it. It will certainly come and will not delay. And then see, he's puffed up.

His desires are not upright, but the righteous will live by his faith. The first part of the answer to Habakkuk's worry and anxiety is that God does indeed have a plan.

But like all things with God, he brings about his plans in his time and in his way. It's going to be God's time frame, not Habakkuk's time frame.

[ 4 : 44 ] The lesson for Habakkuk is that he's going to have to learn to trust God's plan and to trust God's timing. Verse 2 tells us that God does indeed have a plan.

And he wants it written down and so the people will know what it is. But before he tells you the plan, he says, now but just wait. I've got a plan, but it's not going to come immediately.

Verse 3, it's going to take time. The plan, this revelation, it awaits an appointed time. What this says is that God does have a plan.

That there's a goal. In Greek, there's a telos. There's a plan to time and to space and to history. And God is in control of it.

You know, we often make appointments in our daily life, in our work life. We can keep most of them, but very often we can't keep them. Just within the week.

[ 5 : 49 ] Let alone weeks ahead, months ahead, years ahead. And we certainly can't keep appointments centuries ahead. For obvious reasons. God has the whole stretch of history before him.

And he's got certain things at certain times that he knows that he can do. God is in control of history, of time itself.

Things are moving according to God's set plans. And only he can make them happen. I've got a plan. There's an appointed time. But it's going to take time for it to come fruition.

Still in verse 3. This plan, this appointed time, it speaks of the end. It won't prove false. False, that means it's not a lie. It will happen.

And then he says, though it linger, wait for it. Some translations, it might seem slow. Wait for it. God's plans will come about, but they're going to take place according to God's timetable.

[ 6 : 59 ] Not anyone else's. And which for Habakkuk and for us, when we're in the thick of things, always seem slower than we wanted to.

But we're not to think it won't happen. God's plans will certainly come true. That last part of that verse. It will certainly come. Or it will surely come.

And it will not delay. So is it slow or is it quick? Well, it will be quicker than we think. God will move. God will act. God is not slow.

God is not inactive. God is not doing something. He is acting. Things are happening and going to happen. Okay, so that's God having a plan.

But now the question is, okay, I know he's got a plan, but I don't know how he's going to make that plan come into action. I don't know when that plan is going to come into action.

[ 8 : 05 ] And what do you need when someone's got a plan, but he's not telling you what the plan is, and he's not going to tell you when it's going to come about? You need to trust him.

And that's what verse 4 is all about. There's this verse, almost out of nowhere, but a very important verse in the whole story of the Bible.

And it's a very strange verse because it's the first part of the verse, we don't know what's going on, and then it gives this clarion call about faith. So have a look at verse 4. God's got a plan, and then he says, See, he is puffed up, but his desires are not upright.

He is he. Oh, is it Habakkuk? Is it someone else? Who is he? Habakkuk's worried about the Babylonians. That's a they. That's not a he.

And then, but my righteous one, or the righteous, will live by his faith. What's happening here is that often in the Old Testament, you've got a figure of speech.

[ 9 : 08 ] It's a metaphor. It's a way of speaking about a people by speaking about a singular person. So, for example, even the Jewish nation, the Israelites are often known as Israel.

Israel was a dude. He was a guy. And so often you speak about a whole nation by speaking about a single person. So there's a good guy, and there's a bad guy in this verse. The bad guy is Babylon.

He's puffed up with pride. He's not upright. He's a problem. But I've got a plan, God says. I'm not telling you what that plan is.

I'm not going to give you the details. I'm not going to tell you how or when I'm going to do it. So what I need you to do, if you're going to follow me, is to live by faith.

The righteous will live by his faith. An absolutely key biblical truth. The truth that unlocks all the other truths in the Bible.

[ 10 : 06 ] What does trust do in this situation where the world looks like chaos and God has a plan? Trust says, God has got this.

I don't have it. God knows. I don't know. And that's okay. Trust is knowing you don't know what the plans are, but knowing that God knows and resting there.

See what God says just a little bit earlier. Verse 3. Though my plan lingers, though it is going to come in the future, wait for it.

It looks like relaxation in the middle of chaos. Trusting in God's plan. Trusting God's plans means relying that what he has said about his plans is enough.

Letting him bring them about through his wisdom and power and not sweating about the small stuff. Let God sweat about the small stuff. He is way, way better at micromanaging things than we are.

[ 11 : 27 ] We want the details. God wants us to trust him. It's not easy, especially when evil is in front of our eyes and impacting us.

That's why we've got Peter in the New Testament reminding us about these truths. Peter must have been, because almost echoed or thinking about Habakkuk when he wrote that, 2 Peter 3, it should come up on the screen.

Peter says this, Do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The amazing thing that this tells us is that the reason God seems slow is to make sure we get to be part of his plans.

[ 12 : 39 ] To bring us to repentance so that we do not face his judgment, but receive his forgiveness instead. What Habakkuk calls being righteous. And this is why we can trust God and trust his timing.

He is working through all those many centuries. Think about the time span between Habakkuk and Peter. It's 600 odd years.

Habakkuk is plus minus 600 BC. God has got a plan. It's going to come about. God's plan stretches to Peter. Peter says, God has got a plan.

It is going to come about. People are going to trust him. He is going to bring people into his plans for the world. He's going to save people.

He's not going to kill everyone. He's not just going to bring judgment. He's going to bring salvation. People are going to come to repentance. That's 600 years. Many of us don't manage six months ahead.

[ 13 : 50 ] God's got 600 years in his back pocket. It's been 2,000 years since Peter wrote that to you sitting here today and receiving Peter's promises so that you can be included in his plans.

Think of the massive calculation it must have taken to make sure that you whom God has always had in his mind to save sitting here saved and forgiven and righteous.

not to put a too fine a point on it but for you to have been born in the first place there's a lot of options right there.

Everyone at a certain age knows what we're talking about. Just to be born. Huge odds for you to be alive. You. You. Not anyone else.

You. Multiply that out to all the people that came before you for 2,000 years before Peter wrote that. Multiply that out by another 4,000 years to the beginning of time when Adam and Eve were around according to biblical time and multiply that with all the possibilities of everyone hooking up over the centuries.

[ 15 : 14 ] Can we all agree that that is an astronomically huge number? And God has all of that under his control all along the way.

so that you can sit here hear his gospel receive his forgiveness and become part of his plans. But the world is chaos.

But God has been working through time and space to make you real and you saved. So now why can't I trust him with the next how many years have we got left to be alive?

10? 20? 30? And then think how hard or easy is it going to be for this God who's got history under his control to keep you safe in the ups and downs of this life to make sure you receive eternal life.

Can you see why God says to Habakkuk trust me God is trustworthy? He's the only being in all of history that can do this. We sung about the ancient of days.

[ 16 : 28 ] He's got this incredible calculating power to make sure that what he has in his mind comes to reality and in fact there is no chance that whatever God wants doesn't happen.

You're here on purpose. That means you have a purpose and that means God has got everything around you under control. It doesn't need to look like it's under control.

You just need to trust that there is a God who's got it under control. That's the first point that God is making to Habakkuk. But here's the question.

Are we just to trust in this plan without God giving us any idea of what that plan is going to be? That's probably Habakkuk's next question. Okay, you've got a plan. Okay, must I just trust it?

If God would have said, yeah, that's fine, just trust me, then Habakkuk, the book of Habakkuk, would have ended at chapter 2, verse 4. But doesn't. God is going to tell Habakkuk what his plan is.

[ 17 : 34 ] God does tell us what he's going to do. And the rest of the chapter is not about Habakkuk, it's about what God is going to do to the Babylonians.

So all the stuff there, the woes, the shaming, the stuff that people are doing wrong, and the stuff that God is going to do to the people that are doing stuff wrong, that's all against the Babylonians.

What God says, if you take a zoomed out picture, is that evil is not going to have the last word in his world. anything and everything that causes pain and hurt and harm and loss, will be called to account, and they will face both the consequences of their actions, and they cannot face the Lord, this God, as their judge.

What God wants us to know is that we can trust his judgment on sin and evil, that is to say, it will happen. Okay, so we're going to talk about trusting in God's judgment.

We talked about trusting in God's plan, now we're going to talk about trusting in God's judgments. Habakkuk is told that God has a plan, but what is that plan for Babylon?

[ 18 : 56 ] And how does that help us live in today's world? I mean, Babylon, we're talking about centuries ago. This is 2,600 years ago. They don't even exist anymore. Can I learn anything from people that are not even there anymore?

What God shows us in the text is that he has set up two inviolable rules, rules that can't be violated, that are part of reality, in this world, that make it utterly impossible for evil to keep on winning in this world.

You see, because Habakkuk is thinking, okay, you've got a plan, but I'm seeing evil. And God says, no, don't worry. I've got two things that are happening that means that evil will not last in my world.

The first rule is an inbuilt law into nature that evil will not go unpunished or unanswered. Because this is a world that God has created by him, because God has created this world, evil is not sustainable in it.

Yes, there's evil in it, but it's not going to last. It can't go unpunished, because a God of holiness and justice has made this world. Evil is going to get a kickback.

[ 20 : 19 ] It's going to bounce back, almost bounce back on itself. It's going to have this reciprocal effect where evil goes out into the world, and just because it's God's world, it's going to bounce back on you. The evil that Babylon does is going to come back to bite it.

So have a look at verse 7 and 8. Okay, I'll start at verse 6 for us. He's talking about Babylon, he's talking about the stuff that they get up to.

Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn? These are the people that Babylon has gathered to himself in verse 5.

as Babylon grows and grows in power and might, this huge empire. It thinks it's defeating all these people. And God says in verse 6, well, you think you've defeated them, you think you're the God of this world, you think they love you and obey you.

Verse 6, will not all of them taunt him, Babylon, with ridicule and scorn saying, woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion?

[ 21 : 31 ] How long must this go on? Will not your debtors, depending on your translation debtors or creditors, suddenly arise?

Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their prey or their victim. Verse 8, because you Babylon have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you.

God isn't involved here. There's a natural consequence to messing around with God's plan and doing bad things to people. It's going to bound back on you. The people that Babylon has trampled on to get to its position of power, which Babylon thinks it has defeated and don't pose a threat anymore, are going to come back and take revenge.

Babylon doesn't know it, but its days are numbered. What's interesting is that Babylon is, Habakkuk is writing this in the 600s, Babylon is at the might, the highest point in its position of power.

Like every empire that's ever lived, they think they're going to last forever. You've all seen pictures of the hanging gardens of Babylon. If you've been to England, you might have gone to the Museum of History and seen what's called the Ishtar gates, these huge, huge gates.

[ 23 : 04 ] If you took this church and stood it upright like this, that's about the size of those gates that you would walk through. Massive, you can't possibly think that this city, this empire is going to come crumbling down.

Babylon comes crumbling down less than 70 years after Habakkuk is written. It's actually recorded in the book of Daniel.

We don't have time to look at it, but you know the famous handwriting scene on the wall? There's a big feast and the king of Babylon sees handwriting. You're basically saying, your time is up.

What's interesting about that event, it's actually recorded in secular history. We know how Babylon fell. The nations that it had conquered rose up against it in rebellion.

Babylon is either on the Tigris or the Euphrates River in modern day Iraq. They stopped the flow of the river. They walked across on dry ground. They were in the middle of a feast doing the things that Habakkuk says they're doing, drinking, getting lekk for sake.

[ 24 : 17 ] with the other things that go along with that, hey, bring in the dancing girls. Oh, and they're worshipping at the same time.

It's a festival to their god. And then the king says, Daniel, get that stuff from the Israeli temple. Your god, I want him here as well.

I want to show him that we're the boss. Oh, what's that writing on the wall? Your time is up. That night, the people that they had conquered walked over this dry river bed.

It's recorded in one of the ancient histories. Because they were all drinking, the guardsmen with drunk on the floor as they walked in, they put everyone to the knife. The whole city, one night, gone.

586 BC. The next king comes on the throne and says to the Jews, you can go home. The god who is in control of time and space does things like that to his enemies.

[ 25 : 33 ] God's will go home. That's the first rule. Evil is not going to win. You mess around in God's world, it's going to come bouncing back at you.

But there's a second rule in God's world. And if anything, it's scarier than the first rule. This rule is that nations and people that build their lives on breaking God's laws and hurting people are going to have the God of this world as their enemy to destroy them.

We see that in two places in this text. Verse 13, this is now God taking an active role. This was inactive. This is God just going, well, it's my world, you can try and butt your head up against it, but it's going to hurt you, dude.

Here's God saying, well, I think I need to take a hand. And what do you think is going to happen when the God of the universe decides to bring judgment on people? Verse 13, has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

The Lord Almighty, in some translations, the Lord of hosts, that's an army host. Do you remember the story of Sodom and Gomorrah?

[ 27 : 07 ] How many of God's angelic army hosts pitched up and destroyed that city? Do you remember? Do you remember? Now imagine tens of thousands of those guys pitching up and bringing justice.

the people are going to be fuel for the fire. Verse 16, what's going to happen to you?

Oh, you like getting drunk, okay? You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it's your turn, drink, and let your nakedness be exposed. The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming around to you and disgrace will cover your glory.

God's right hand is his doing hand, just like it is in our society. It's the strong hand. It's the hand with the power. It's the hand with the sword.

It's the hand with law and order and justice. thank God there's another cup at God's right hand.

[ 28 : 26 ] But he doesn't just bring justice and the sword, that there's forgiveness. I'm talking about Jesus, who forgives us.

Babylon, and by extension, all nations and people that live without acknowledging the Lord as God, who break his laws and hurt others, are going to be nothing but fuel for the fire of God's wrath.

Nothing but fuel for the fire of God's wrath. I don't know anything scarier than that. I don't know about you. 2 Peter 3, still thinking about this, of how the God who brings judgment, says this, the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

That does not sound like it's going to be a fun day for you or for anyone who's been messing around in God's world with other people. No one escapes God's judgment.

[ 29 : 42 ] God is able to raise up the Babylonians to take out his own people and then he judges the Babylonians for being evil themselves.

Do you get how God works there? It's a bit of a mind thing for us. Habakkuk in chapter 1, Lord, there's so much bad things happening in the land of Israel.

Can you fix it? God's answer, yes, I'm going to fix it. I'm going to bring the Babylonians, they're going to kill everyone. Whoa, don't do that. Then God says, don't worry, I'm also going to kill the Babylonians.

Whoa. When I was teaching this kind of stuff at Utah, not this book, but this where God judges evil, brings another nation to judge his nation or other nations, he's already used Babylon to judge the Ninevites who took out northern Israel in the same way.

They also live on a river. They stopped the river, and one night they took Nino, the Syrians, and then God repeats it a couple hundred years later with the same guys, same story. Anyway, I was teaching this kind of thing, and one of the guys at Utah came from the gangs, and he could only marvel at how clever God is.

[ 31 : 03 ] Yo, but God is a gangster. And at first I thought, ooh, it doesn't sound right. but he has a point.

They can respect guys that can take care of people, and take care of the people who take care of the people because they're both evil, and still be in the right. right. What does this mean for us today?

Well, first of all, if you're not right with God, you mustn't think you're going to make it through this judgment on your own. God has made only one way for you to be right with him, and trusting him is the key.

The only way is trusting in Jesus Christ as his appointed king, who alone can pardon your sins, and make you right with God. And in the miracle of miracles, which we commemorated today, on the cross, Jesus takes God's wrath on your behalf, so you don't have to face that alone, or at all.

Just that makes us thankful for Jesus. don't leave here if you're not right with God.

[ 32 : 29 ] Come to Christ. Don't face that by yourself. You don't have to. The gospel, the promises, you don't have to face that by yourself. You can throw yourself on the mercy of one who has and the wonderful promise of the gospel.

We've seen it through the book of Acts, if you're studying the book of Acts with us. The people that killed Jesus, the apostles say, hey, all you have to do is say sorry and you can be friends with him.

You just have to say sorry. And Jesus is like, yeah, let's be friends. That's the promise. But, if you're right with God, but struggling with ongoing evil in the world, which many of us are, we're right with God, we're looking at the world, what's going on?

Evil in the world on a national level, what's going on Israel, America, Ukraine, Russia, what's going on in South Africa, we've got our own problems, what's going to happen?

What about evil in my own life? I don't mean the evil that you do, sorry, that doesn't sound right, the evil that we do, we all do some stuff wrong, I don't mean that, I mean the evil that has happened to you, bad stuff that has happened to you, you might be dealing with that, there's evil out there, there's evil that's happening to us, this tells us we can trust God's, that God will and does judge evil, he will evil, and does judge evil, both within time and space, and at the final judgment, both within time and space, like he did with the Babylonians, and his people, there are dates, you can look at the dates, God doesn't postpone final judgment to the end of time, but he does postpone the greatest judgment to the end of time, so when you see chaos in the world, and the pain and the destruction that goes on, that is a picture in miniature, it's a

[ 34 : 49 ] Lego, Star Wars version of what's going to happen in the real, the real thing, that's what you're supposed to get about the chaos in the world, that's a small picture, that's a thumbnail, that's a bunch of roses compared to what's going to happen on judgment day, you read it in Peter, judgment isn't on hold until the end of the world, God judges people and nations all the time, the same type of thing he did with the Babylonians, he will do, or can do, with the Iraqis, the Israelis, the Americans, and our land, now I'm not, hear what I'm saying, I'm not telling you who is Babylon there, if they do not repent, and have Christ as their king, they're going to be fuel for the fire, as much as you are, if you don't have Christ as your king.

But trusting that God will do the right thing, and deliver exactly the right amount of justice at the right time, which is what God is telling Habakkuk is doing, means that we don't need to stand in judgment of what's going on in the world.

We don't need to keep on blaming people for what happened in the past. Think about that now. God is going to do the judgment. In South Africa, that saw that was ripped open with the boors going off to America, and now who's got justice?

When are you going to give the land back? God will give the right amount of justice at the right time to anyone who's hurt his people.

we don't have to stand in judgment on them and keep on blaming people for what happened in the past, as if to hold them to account. What Habakkuk is saying is that God will be the judge, but that he will be the judge.

[ 36 : 51 ] He will call people to account for what they've done. And if you believe that, if you trust that, then what are you doing trying to hold people to account? Leave them. If anything, be merciful to them, because we've seen what's going to happen on judgment day to those poor people.

Be nice. Don't be more horrible to them. If anything, just say, guys, be careful, come to the light. Forgive. live. And lastly, what God is telling us to do on a political and national level, trust his judgment, trusting his judgments, he wants you to do on a personal level.

It's very likely that you've been wronged in your life. In fact, not likely. Every one of us has been wronged in this life. Some of us have been very badly wronged.



God's message to you through Habakkuk, he will judge that evil.

He will not let it go unpaid for. There is a reckoning coming for every evil that has been done to you. God will make it right. trust in God here means letting go of the past, letting go of the anger, letting go of the bitterness and the pain.

[ 38 : 13 ] Don't keep on focusing on the past or the pain or the people who did it. Hand them over to God, but not in a vengeful way, for mercy.

Better yet, hand them over to Jesus on the cross and then let Jesus' blood heal and comfort and clean you. Whatever wrong has been done to you can and is healed by the power of Jesus' blood.

Jesus doesn't just forgive the sins that we have done. He also heals the sins of what others have done to us in our lives. Let God deal with them.

You've got better things to focus on. Peter ends with this verse. In keeping with his promise, we are looking forward, not behind us, to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

Oh, that sounds like something we're thinking about. Don't waste your time worrying about what's happening with the nations or over worry yourself what's happening with the nations of the world.

[ 39 : 28 ] We've got to pay some attention. Be careful of working out exactly who's right and exactly who's wrong. You don't know. It hasn't been revealed yet. God knows. Let him do the judging.

Don't worry about what evil has been done to you in the past. Trust in the God whose plans for your forgiveness and healing will come true. Whose plans for your healing will come true.

And who promises you an eternity in the new heavens and the new earth where all evil is gone and only goodness and blessing and life and joy remain.

Will you trust God for these things? It's way better to do that than to try and fight these battles by yourself. Let's ask God to help us. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Mighty and merciful Heavenly Father, we stand in all Lord of your judgments.

[ 40 : 39 ] You are right in your judgments. Just Lord, you do the right thing. It scares us because we know we've got sin in us. But Lord, thank you for Jesus and the forgiveness and the sacrifice of his cross to make us right with you.

Help us, Lord, not to stand in judgment and to stay in the hurt and the pain in our lives, but to release it to your fatherly, merciful, tender care and have Jesus' blood clean us and make us whole.

Amen.